

# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 889

CG 014 841

AUTHOR Breaugh, James A.; DiMarco, Nicholas  
 TITLE The Rated Desirability of Job Attributes: Age Differences and Similarities.  
 PUB DATE Sep 80  
 NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (88th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, September 1-5, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS \*Age Differences; Attitude Measures; \*Career Ladders; \*Employee Attitudes; \*Job Satisfaction; Motivation; Occupational Mobility; Professional Development; Promotion (Occupational); Stereotypes; Values; \*Vocational Adjustment; \*Work Attitudes

## ABSTRACT

If consistent age differences can be delineated in the way job attributes are valued, such information should lead to a better psychological understanding of workers, and allow decisions relevant to the satisfaction and motivation of older and younger workers to be based on fact rather than assumptions and stereotypes. Two research samples were examined to evaluate the generalizability of any age differences found in worker attitudes toward several common job attributes, including promotion opportunities and personal and professional development. Results of the two studies, using low-level clerical employees in one sample and scientific personnel in the other, indicate that there are age differences in the way certain job attributes are valued. Some differences, however, appear to be situation-specific. A number of common age stereotypes were not confirmed, e.g., job security was not rated as more desirable by older workers in either sample. The results of this research, taken in conjunction with the findings of previous studies, suggest that caution should be exercised in making generalizations about age differences in the values attached to job attributes. (Author)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

ED195889

The Rated Desirability of Job Attributes:  
Age Differences and Similarities

James A. Breaugh  
Nicholas DiMarco

University of Missouri-St. Louis

CG 014841

Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Sept. 1980, Montreal, Canada.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,  
EDUCATION & WELFARE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*James A. Breaugh*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

## The Rated Desirability of Job Attributes:

### Age Differences and Similarities

Since the passage of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and the raising of the minimum mandatory retirement age (for most workers) to 70 in 1978, there has been increasing interest in age changes and age differences in employed persons. One particular area which has been stressed as meriting examination (Hall & Mansfield, 1975) concerns what workers value in their jobs and whether the values attached to these job attributes (e.g., job security, high pay) change as one grows older. The relative values attached to such job attributes not only have an effect upon how satisfied one is with one's job (i.e., does my job offer things I desire?) but also upon one's motivational level (i.e., are the rewards offered for good performance worth working for?). As noted by Rosen and Jerdee (1976), numerous age stereotypes exist (e.g., job security becomes more important as one grows older); however, the accuracy of many of these stereotypes remains to be tested.

To date, few studies have addressed this important topic of age differences in job attribute desirability and some of those findings which do exist are of limited value because of methodological deficiencies. For example, while it has been shown that as one grows older promotion opportunities are less important (Heneman, 1973) and having a considerate supervisor becomes more highly valued (Jurgensen, 1978), the significance of the results of these and other studies is diminished because of the limited number of job attributes which were rated, the small number of older workers in the sample, etc.

This study was designed to build upon earlier research; it examined whether there were, in fact, systematic age differences in the relative desirability of

several common job attributes (e.g., promotion opportunities). If consistent age differences in the way job attributes are valued can be delineated, this information should lead to a better psychological understanding of workers and allow decisions relevant to the satisfaction and motivation of older and younger workers to be based on fact rather than on assumption. In order to evaluate the generalizability of any age differences which were found, two different research samples were examined in this study.

#### Method

This study presents job attribute desirability ratings which were gathered from two different research samples. Participation in the study was voluntary for individuals in either sample. The first sample ("Sample 1") was composed of low level clerical employees who worked for a large midwestern public utility. Of the 120 individuals asked to participate, 106 actually completed questionnaires. The second sample ("Sample 2") consisted of scientific personnel who worked for a large midwestern chemical company. Of the 775 individuals asked to participate, 563 persons returned completed questionnaires.

The measurement strategy used in this study closely paralleled that suggested by Nadler and Lawler (1977) and others for measuring the desirability of job attributes. The list of ten job attributes used in this study (see Table 1) was based upon previous research (e.g., Brief & Aldag, 1976; Jurgensen, 1978). These attributes were rated on a 9-point scale which ranged from "Highly Undesirable" (-4) to "Highly Desirable" (+4):

In order to determine whether there were age differences in the rated desirability of the job attributes, the samples were broken into four age groups: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-65. The sample sizes for the various age groups are reported in Table 1 (for Sample 1) and Table 2 (for Sample 2).

## Results

### Sample 1

The effect of employee age on the rated desirability of job attributes was evaluated by several statistical procedures. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to test the null hypothesis that age groups did not differ in their means on any of the dependent variables. A significant multivariate effect was found ( $F_{30,275} = 2.57$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Further examination of the data (see Table 1) showed significant univariate age effects for three of the job attributes. For each significant univariate effect, post hoc testing (Duncan's Test) was carried out. Such post hoc probing enables one to determine between which age groups a significant difference exists. The results of the post hoc analyses are presented in Table 2.

---

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

---

### Sample 2

A strong multivariate age effect was also found for the rated desirability of job attributes for Sample 2 ( $F_{30,1646} = 3.37$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Subsequent univariate analyses of variance (Table 3) found statistically significant age differences for five of the job attributes. The results of the post hoc probing of these univariate effects are reported in Table 4.

---

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

---

## Discussion

In the introductory section it was posited that as the percentage of older people working increases, it becomes exceedingly important to determine the extent to which there are age differences in the values attached to various job

attributes. This study investigated whether age groups differed in their desirability ratings of ten common job attributes. In order to evaluate the generalizability of any age differences which were found, two different research samples were used. As can be seen (Tables 1-4), a number of age differences were detected. Three of these differences generalized across samples (i.e., opportunity for professional development, opportunity for personal development, being expected to do more in the future) while two age differences were unique to Sample 2 (i.e., being promoted, having to move to a new city). For the eight significant differences which were found, in all cases the two older age group rated the attributes as less desirable than the younger two age groups did.

In summary, from the data presented it appears that there are age differences in the way certain job attributes are valued. However, some of these differences appear to be situation specific. Still, even though age differences in job attribute desirability may not be readily generalizable, knowing that age differences exist in a given situation should be useful information for someone attempting to understand the behavior of older and younger workers in that situation (e.g., why older workers aren't as motivated by the opportunity for professional development). In addition, this study's findings make salient the need to test existing age stereotypes (e.g., job security was not more important for older workers). Clearly, additional research in this area is needed.

## References

- Brief, A.P. & Oliver, R.L. Male-Female differences in work attitudes among retail sales managers. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1976, 61, 526-528.
- Hall, D.T. & Mansfield, R. Relationships of age and seniority with career variables of engineers and scientists. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1975, 60, 201-210.
- Heneman, H.G. The relationship between age and motivation to perform the job. Industrial Gerontology, 1973, Winter, 30-36.
- Jurgensen, C.E. Job preferences (what makes a job good or bad?). Journal of Applied Psychology, 1978, 63, 267-276.
- Nadler, D.A. & Lawler, E.E. Motivation: A diagnostic approach. In J.R. Hackman, E.E. Lawler & L.W. Porter (Eds.) Perspectives on behavior in organizations. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.
- Rosen, B. & Jerdee, T. The nature of job-related age stereotypes. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1976, 61, 180-183.

TABLE 1

Desirability Ratings of Job Attributes for  
Sample One: Means and Statistical Tests

| Job Attributes                              | Age Group                    |                 |                 |                 | F      |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|
|                                             | 20-29 <sup>1</sup><br>(n=24) | 30-39<br>(n=35) | 40-49<br>(n=28) | 50-65<br>(n=19) |        |
| 1. Opportunity for Professional Development | 2.96                         | 2.60            | 2.00            | 1.84            | 2.78** |
| 2. Receiving Praise                         | 2.83                         | 2.20            | 2.14            | 2.37            | 1.12   |
| 3. Being Required to Travel                 | -0.17                        | -1.22           | -1.04           | -1.42           | 1.15   |
| 4. Job Security                             | 3.42                         | 3.11            | 3.07            | 3.74            | 1.61   |
| 5. Opportunity for Personal Development     | 3.00                         | 2.74            | 2.00            | 2.11            | 2.14*  |
| 6. Being Promoted                           | 3.29                         | 2.83            | 2.64            | 2.42            | 1.22   |
| 7. Pay Increase                             | 3.17                         | 3.40            | 3.39            | 3.26            | .29    |
| 8. Expected to Do More in the Future        | .67                          | .86             | -0.43           | -0.32           | 3.01** |
| 9. Working on Challenging Projects          | 3.33                         | 3.17            | 2.89            | 2.79            | 1.04   |
| 10. Having to Move to a New City            | -1.25                        | -1.40           | -1.29           | -1.21           | .03    |

<sup>1</sup> Age Group Mean (-4 = Highly Undesirable . . . +4 = Highly Desirable)

\*p<.10 (All significance tests reported are 2-tailed)

\*\*p<.05

\*\*\*p<.01

TABLE 2

Results of Post Hoc Tests for Age Group Differences for  
Job Attributes Which Were Significant for Sample One

| Job Attributes                              | Group Differences ( $p < .05$ )        |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1) Opportunity for Professional Development | 50's < 20's, 30's<br>40's < 20's, 30's |
| 5) Opportunity for Personal Development     | 50's < 20's, 30's<br>40's < 20's, 30's |
| 8) Expected to Do More in the Future        | 50's < 20's, 30's<br>40's < 20's, 30's |

TABLE 3

Desirability Ratings of Job Attributes for  
Sample Two: Means and Statistical Tests

| Job Attributes                              | Age Group                     |                  |                  |                  | F        |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|
|                                             | 20-29 <sup>1</sup><br>(n=139) | 30-39<br>(n=175) | 40-49<br>(n=121) | 50-65<br>(n=128) |          |
| 1. Opportunity for Professional Development | 2.84                          | 2.71             | 2.18             | 2.02             | 12.01*** |
| 2. Receiving Praise                         | 2.41                          | 2.50             | 2.33             | 2.19             | 1.55     |
| 3. Being Required to Travel                 | -0.30                         | -0.42            | -0.40            | -0.70            | 1.30     |
| 4. Job Security                             | 2.59                          | 2.65             | 2.72             | 2.85             | .93      |
| 5. Opportunity for Personal Development     | 2.94                          | 2.67             | 2.32             | 2.05             | 12.35*** |
| 6. Being Promoted                           | 3.12                          | 3.18             | 2.67             | 2.32             | 10.16*** |
| 7. Pay Increase                             | 3.46                          | 3.87             | 3.49             | 3.51             | 2.01     |
| 8. Expected to Do More in the Future        | 0.69                          | 0.41             | -0.05            | -0.08            | 3.71**   |
| 9. Working on Challenging Projects          | 3.14                          | 3.29             | 3.16             | 3.17             | .84      |
| 10. Having to Move to a New City            | -1.11                         | -1.19            | -1.82            | -1.99            | 6.29**   |

<sup>1</sup> Age Group (-4 = Highly Undesirable . . . +4 = Highly Desirable)

\*p<.1 (All Significance tests reported are 2-tailed)

\*\*p<.05

\*\*\*p<.01

TABLE 4

Results of Post Hoc Tests for Age Group Differences for  
Job Attributes Which Were Significant for Sample Two

| Job Attributes                              |      |              |
|---------------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| 1) Opportunity for Professional Development | 50's | < 20's, 30's |
|                                             | 40's | < 20's, 30's |
| 5) Opportunity for Personal Development     | 50's | < 20's, 30's |
|                                             | 40's | < 20's       |
| 6) Being Promoted                           | 50's | < 20's, 30's |
|                                             | 40's | < 20's, 30's |
| 8) Expected to Do More in the Future        | 50's | < 20's, 30's |
|                                             | 40's | < 20's, 30's |
| 10) Having to Move to a New City            | 50's | < 20's, 30's |
|                                             | 40's | < 20's, 30's |